

**SPEECH BY
ASSOCIATE JUSTICE REBOLLO-LÓPEZ
U.S. CITIZENSHIP CEREMONY
FEDERAL COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF PUERTO RICO
JULY 3, 2007**

TO BE AN AMERICAN CITIZEN IS NOT, AS MANY THINK OR OTHERS WOULD LIKE TO REPRESENT, ONLY AN ABUNDANCE OF ECONOMIC AND MATERIAL RICHES. IT IS POSSIBLE THAT BEING AN AMERICAN CITIZEN IS NOT BEING A PART OF A NATION IN WHICH PEOPLE'S DAILY LIVES ARE AN UNBRIDLED RACE GEARED TOWARDS CONSUMERISM AND ACQUIRING MORE AND MORE GOODS, EITHER. MANY THINK, MISTAKENLY, THAT FROM A CULTURAL AND NATIONAL IDENTIFICATION PERSPECTIVE, ONE IS AN AMERICAN CITIZEN BY MERELY WEARING THE LATEST FASHION IN CLOTHES. THEY ARE WRONG.

TO BE A CITIZEN OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA MEANS BEING PART OF A NATION THAT FROM ITS INCEPTION ESTABLISHED VERY CLEARLY IN ITS DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE THAT, AS EVIDENT TRUTHS, ALL OF US ARE CREATED EQUAL AND ARE ENDOWED WITH CERTAIN INALIENABLE RIGHTS, SUCH AS LIFE, LIBERTY AND THE PURSUIT OF HAPPINESS.

TO BE AN AMERICAN CITIZEN MEANS BELONGING TO A NATION THAT, AS THE AMERICAN CREED ESTABLISHES, HAS A DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT WITH POWERS DERIVED FROM THE CONSENT OF THE

GOVERNED THEMSELVES, AND THE PILLARS OF WHICH ARE FREEDOM, EQUALITY, JUSTICE AND HUMANITY.

BUT JUST AS IMPORTANT, OR EVEN MORE SO, BEING AN AMERICAN CITIZEN MEANS HAVING THE PROTECTION OF ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT JUDICIAL AND POLITICAL DOCUMENTS EVER TO EXIST IN THE HISTORY OF HUMANITY: THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA.

WE MAY ASK OURSELVES, WHAT IS IT AND WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO BE PROTECTED BY THIS CONSTITUTION? BY DEFINITION, THIS IS THE SUPREME LAW OF THE NATION, SPECIFYING AND ENUMERATING THE DUTIES AND POWERS OF THE THREE BRANCHES OF GOVERNMENT: THE EXECUTIVE, THE LEGISLATIVE AND THE JUDICIAL. BUT TRULY, THE CONSTITUTION IS MUCH MORE THAN THAT: IT IS THE DOCUMENT THAT INCLUDES THE BILL OF RIGHTS, WHICH WAS DESIGNED TO PROTECT US FROM THE CONTROL, THE POSSIBLE OPPRESSION AND THE ABUSE OF THE GOVERNMENT ITSELF. IT IS THROUGH THE RIGHTS GRANTED THEREBY THAT A BALANCE IS ACHIEVED BETWEEN THE PEOPLE'S LIBERTIES AND THE POWER OF GOVERNMENT.

SAID CONSTITUTION IS THE ONE THAT ENABLES US TO LIVE ACCORDING TO THE PRINCIPLES OF OUR PREFERENCE AND PRACTICE THE CREED OF OUR CHOICE, WITHOUT THE STATE BEING ABLE TO

IMPOSE ON US ITS VIEWS. IT IS THAT CONSTITUTION THAT EMPOWERS US TO EXPRESS OURSELVES AND ASSOCIATE FREELY WITHOUT OUR COMMENTS, EXPRESSIONS, OR AFFILIATIONS HAVING NEGATIVE REPERCUSSIONS ON US OR OUR LOVED ONES. THIS MAGNA CARTA IS ALSO WHAT GRANTS US THE POWER TO ASK THE GOVERNMENT FOR REDRESS FOR DAMAGES WHEN OUR CIVIL OR POLITICAL RIGHTS HAVE BEEN VIOLATED. THE CONSTITUTION IS WHAT PROTECTS OUR PERSONS, OUR HOMES, AND OUR BELONGINGS FROM UNREASONABLE SEARCHES CONDUCTED BY THE STATE.

LIKEWISE, IT IS THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES THAT GRANTS US THE RIGHT TO ENJOY A TRULY PRIVATE PROPERTY WITHOUT THE STATE, AS AN ABSOLUTE SOVEREIGN, BEING ABLE TO EXPROPRIATE IT IN THE ABSENCE OF JUST COMPENSATION.

WE SHOULD ALSO MENTION THAT ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE CONSTITUTION – AND ONE THAT IS NOT ALWAYS EMPHASIZED – IS THE FLEXIBILITY OF THIS GRAND DOCUMENT. SAID IN OTHER WORDS, THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IS NOT STATIC, IT IS NOT INERT OR RETROGRADE. QUITE THE CONTRARY.

NOW, AS NEW CITIZENS, YOU WILL BE PROTECTED BY A CONSTITUTION THAT ADAPTS TO THE TIMES AND THE NEEDS OF OUR

NATION, MAINLY THROUGH THE INTERPRETATIONS THAT THE SUPREME COURT OF THE UNITED STATES, AS THE ULTIMATE INTERPRETER OF THE CONSTITUTION, HAS MADE AND MAKES OF ITS PROVISIONS. MAYBE THIS IS ONE OF THE MOST IMPORTANT CHARACTERISTICS ESTABLISHED BY THE FRAMERS OF THE CONSTITUTION. THE CONSTITUTION TO WHICH YOU HAVE PLEDGED ALLEGIANCE TODAY IS A HISTORICAL DOCUMENT IN CONSTANT FLUX THAT KEEPS PACE WITH THE WORLD AS IT EVOLVES AND THE NEW ATTITUDES AND PHILOSOPHIES OF OUR MODERN SOCIETY.

ON THE OTHER HAND, AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP IMPOSES A NUMBER OF DUTIES THAT WE HAVE AN OBLIGATION TO CARRY OUT, BECAUSE AS STATED BY THE ILLUSTRIOUS WILLIAM TYLER PAGE, THE AUTHOR OF THE AMERICAN CREED, AS AMERICAN CITIZENS WE MUST LOVE OUR NATION, SUPPORT ITS CONSTITUTION, OBEY ITS LAWS, RESPECT ITS FLAG AND DEFEND IT FROM ITS ENEMIES.

OFTENTIMES COMPLIANCE WITH SUCH DUTIES REQUIRES SACRIFICES AND EFFORTS THAT, UNFORTUNATELY AND OCCASIONALLY DEMAND THAT WE EVEN GIVE OUR OWN LIVES. I AM REFERRING, OF COURSE, TO THE DIFFICULT BUT PATRIOTIC DUTY OF TAKING UP ARMS TO DEFEND OUR COUNTRY'S NATIONAL SECURITY; A DUTY THAT EXISTS BY VIRTUE OF SOME NOBLE CAUSES THAT ARE, PRECISELY, OF A CONSTITUTIONAL ORIGIN, THAT IS, THE DEFENSE

OF FREEDOM AND DEMOCRACY. THE CITIZENSHIP THAT YOU CALL YOURS TODAY HAS BEEN THE SAME ONE THAT THOUSANDS OF BRAVE MEN AND WOMEN HAVE HELD AND WHO HAVE GIVEN AND STILL GIVE THEIR LIVES TODAY IN THE BLOODY CONFLICTS WHERE TOTALITARIANISM, FASCISM, AND COMMUNISM, JUST TO NAME A FEW, WANTED OR WANT TO SUBMERGE ALL OF HUMANITY IN THE ABYSS OF AN ABSOLUTIST POWER.

THE CITIZENSHIP THAT YOU ALL ACQUIRE TODAY IS A VALUABLE TREASURE. I KNOW THAT FOR MANY OF YOU IT IS DIFFICULT TO DISSOCIATE YOURSELVES, AT LEAST JUDICIALLY, FROM THE COUNTRY THAT WITNESSED YOUR BIRTH. TO BE AN AMERICAN CITIZEN, HOWEVER, DOES NOT REQUIRE, NOR DOES IT IMPLY, THAT YOU CEASE TO LOVE THE COUNTRY OF YOUR BIRTH. QUITE THE CONTRARY. YOU MAY FEEL PROUD OF BOTH.

WE WELCOME ALL OF YOU WHO, AS OF THIS DAY, FROM A LEGAL STANDPOINT, BECOME PART OF THE AMERICAN PEOPLE, A PEOPLE WHO FOR MANY YEARS HAVE BEEN, AND FOR MANY MORE YEARS TO COME WILL BE, AT THE VANGUARD OF DEMOCRACY, REPRESENTED SOLELY BY A SOVEREIGN GOVERNMENT, WHO CHOOSE THROUGH INSTITUTIONS OF LAW AND ORDER THEIR OWN DESTINY AND THAT OF THEIR PROGENY.

MANY DOORS ARE OPENED UP TODAY. TODAY YOU BECOME CITIZENS OF A POWERFUL AND COMPASSIONATE NATION THAT IS THE BIRTHPLACE OF MODERN DEMOCRACY AND THE HOPE FOR MANY WHO, JUST LIKE YOU, HOPE TO ONE DAY PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO ITS FLAG, ITS INSTITUTIONS OF LAW AND ORDER, AND ALSO TO ITS NUMEROUS INSTITUTIONS OF SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC GROWTH.

THE ALLEGIANCE AND FIDELITY YOU PLEDGE TODAY TO THE CONSTITUTION OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA IS NOT ONLY A REASON FOR HOPE FOR ALL OF YOU, BUT ALSO FOR ALL THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY A PART OF THIS NATION. WE ARE WITNESSES TO THE MANY WHO CAME BEFORE YOU AND OBTAINED THEIR AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP, MOVED BY A DESIRE TO FORGE A BETTER FUTURE FOR THEMSELVES, AND WITH THEIR DEDICATION AND EFFORT HAVE BECOME VALUABLE MEN AND WOMEN AND BASTIONS OF OUR NATION.

I INVITE YOU TO FOLLOW THEIR EXAMPLE AND REMIND YOU THAT YOUR STRUGGLE TO BECOME AMERICAN CITIZENS DOES NOT END WITH THE OATH YOU HAVE TAKEN TODAY. AS AMERICAN CITIZENS, YOUR FORMAL CONTRIBUTION TO THE DEVELOPMENT AND ENHANCEMENT OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA BEGINS TODAY, AS YOU JOIN THE HUNDREDS OF AMERICAN CITIZENS WHO STRUGGLE DAY IN AND DAY OUT TO FORGE A BETTER NATION. I

HARBOR NOT THE SLIGHTEST DOUBT THAT ALL OF YOU PRESENT
HERE WILL TAKE ON THIS TASK EARNESTLY AND PROUDLY.

OUR MOST HEARTFELT CONGRATULATIONS TO YOU AND YOUR
LOVED ONES. MAY THE GOOD LORD BLESS AND PROTECT YOU
ALWAYS.